

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT PO

SUBJECT: SOARES TELLS HIS SIDE

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER SOARES, IN A LENGTHY INTERVIEW IN PRO-SOCIALIST "DIARIO DE NOTICIAS" DEFENDED THE GOVERNMENT AND PLAYED ITS OPPONENTS. WITH THE INTERVIEW AND A TV APPEARANCE LATER THIS EVENING, SOARES HOPES TO SEIZE THE INITIATIVE FROM HIS CRITICS BOTH ON THE RIGHT AND LEFT. DESPITE ITS PARTISAN OVERTONES, THE INTERVIEW WAS A GOOD BEGINNING. END SUMMARY.

1. IN A THREE-PAGE INTERVIEW IN THE JUNE 7 EDITION OF
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"DIARIO DE NOTICIAS," PRIME MINISTER SOARES COVERED THE POLITICAL WATERFRONT. HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDED:

-- THE EUROPEAN OPTION: THE DECISION TO REQUEST MEMBERSHIP IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY WAS HISTORICALLY THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT DURING ITS FIRST TEN MONTHS. THE REQUEST REPRESENTED A FIRM OPTION FOR EUROPE.
-- ECONOMY ON UPSWING: CRITICISMS OF THE GOVERNMENT BY THE

RIGHT FOR LACK OF ACTION AND THE LEFT FOR PROMOTING "CAPITALIST RECOVERY" CANCEL THEMSELVES OUT. PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE: IMMIGRANT REMITTANCES ARE UP 100 PERCENT DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1977 AND THERE HAS BEEN A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN FOREIGN INVESTMENT. LITTLE MORE COULD HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT RESORT TO VIOLENCE.

-- RISING PRICES: THE GOVERNMENT'S INABILITY TO CHECK THE RISING COST OF LIVING IS A MAJOR DISAPPOINTMENT. SERIOUS FAILURES IN AGRICULTURE AND INADEQUATE CONTROL MECHANISMS HAVE COMPOUNDED THE PROBLEM. THE EFFORT TO HOLD THE LINE ON FOOD PRICES WILL INEVITABLY HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE BALANCE OF PAYMENTS.

-- CURBING SEPARATISM: THE SEPARATIST MOVEMENT IN THE AZORES IS SUPPORTED BY THE MOST REACTIONARY FORCES. IF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IS INCAPABLE OR UNWILLING TO END VIOLENCE COMMITTED IN THE NAME OF SEPARATISM, THEN THE CENTRAL AUTHORITIES WILL HAVE TO STEP IN.

-- DECOLONIZATION: THE APRIL 1974 REVOLUTION WAS ABOVE ALL A MOVE TO PUT AN END TO THE COLONIAL WARS. THE TRANSFORMATION OF AFRICAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS INTO MARXIST-LENINIST PARTIES HAS ALTERED THE BALANCE OF FORCES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND COMPLICATED PORTUGUESE EFFORTS TO COME TO TERMS WITH ITS FORMER COLONIES. THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW A PRUDENT POLICY DESIGNED TO PROTECT PORTUGUESE INTERESTS.

-- LOAN STILL ON TRACK: PORTUGAL HAS PURSUED PRIVATE DIPLOMACY IN SUPPORT OF EFFORTS TO OBTAIN INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE. PREACHING IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE DOES NOT CONVINCE BANKERS. "I REMAIN CONFIDENT AND CALM REGARDING THE LOANS." THE INITIATIVE OF PRESIDENT CARTER AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION TO ASSIST PORTUGAL REPRESENTS NOT ONLY A GREAT TRIBUTE TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT BUT ALSO THE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS WHICH IT REPRESENTS. IT IS THE BEST GUARANTEE THAT PORTUGAL'S FINANCIAL PROBLEMS WILL BE SOLVED. THE AGREEMENT IN LONDON AND BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND GERMANY IS THE BEST ANSWER TO THOSE WHO SUGGEST THAT THERE IS A FUNDAMENTAL DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE AMERICANS AND THE EUROPEANS WITH REGARD TO AID TO PORTUGAL.

-- IN DEFENSE OF TRAVEL: SALAZAR WAS ACCUSED OF PROVINCIALISM; NOW THE PRIME MINISTER IS ACCUSED OF TRAVELING TOO MUCH. THE TRIPS WHICH HAVE BEEN TAKEN HAVE ALL BEEN IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST. MORE THAN 90 PERCENT OF THE INVITATIONS HE RECEIVES HAVE BEEN DECLINED OR POSTPONED.

-- PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION; CHARGES THAT THE PRIME MINISTER IS AN INEPT ADMINISTRATOR ARE UNFOUNDED. EACH MINISTER HAS A CONSIDERABLE RANGE OF AUTONOMY. THE STYLE OF THE PRIME MINISTER IS NOT TO IMPOSE HIS WILL BUT RATHER TO COORDINATE THE ACTIVITIES OF THE VARIOUS MINISTRIES. THE GOVERNMENT IS A TEAM WHICH ARRIVES AT COLLECTIVE DECISIONS TO PROMOTE THE

GENERAL WELFARE.

-- KUDOS FOR THE RC: RELATIONS WITH THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL ARE EXCELLENT. THE RC FULFILLS A LEGITIMATE CONSTITUTIONAL FUNCTION.

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-- DITTO FOR THE ARMED FORCES: THE RESTORATION OF DISCIPLINE AND A SENSE OF HIERARCHY WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES HAS PLAYED A DECISIVE ROLE IN THE POLITICAL STABILIZATION PROCESS.

-- BALANCE BETWEEN PRESIDENCY AND ASSEMBLY: THE NATURAL TENDENCY FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO GRAVITATE TOWARD THE PRESIDENCY TO ENHANCE ITS AUTHORITY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE ASSEMBLY MUST BE RESISTED. AN EQUILIBRIUM IN THE RELATIONS AMONG THE PRINCIPAL CONSTITUTIONAL ORGANS IS ESSENTIAL.

-- PARTY-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS: THERE IS A NATURAL TENSION BETWEEN THE GOVERNING PARTY AND THE GOVERNMENT. BUT IMPROVEMENTS IN THE RELATIONSHIP ARE NECESSARY. PARTY DISCIPLINE REMAINS ESSENTIAL ON KEY LEGISLATIVE ISSUES.

-- A WARNING TO THE PS LEFT WING: ONLY A SIGNIFICANT SPLIT

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IN THE PS PARLIAMENTARY GROUP COULD CAUSE THE GOVERNMENT TO FALL. THIS WOULD PROMOTE A GOVERNMENT OF THE RIGHT AND ONLY HELP THOSE INTERESTED IN DESTROYING DEMOCRACY. LOPES CARDOSO AND OTHER PS LEFT-WINGERS MUST RISE ABOVE THE PASSIONS OF THE MOMENT TO LOOK TO THE IMPLICATIONS OF THEIR ACTS.

-- RELATIONS WITH THE PRESIDENCY: OBSERVERS WHO SEE THE POLITICAL SYSTEM MOVING TOWARD PRESIDENTIAL DOMINATION ARE DECIDEDLY WRONG. THE PRESIDENT IS A DEMOCRAT. HE HAS NO INTENTION OF REDUCING THE POWERS OF THE ASSEMBLY, THE GOVERNMENT, OR THE PARTIES. THE GOVERNMENT HAS RECEIVED TOTAL SUPPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT WHENEVER THAT SUPPORT WAS NEEDED. THE PRESIDENT IS PREPARED TO ACT WHEN ACTION IS REQUIRED; THE AZORES IS A CASE IN POINT.

-- PRESIDENTIAL CONFIDENCE: THE VERY CONTINUATION OF THE GOVERNMENT IN POWER IS EVIDENCE THAT IT CONTINUES TO ENJOY THE FULL CONFIDENCE OF THE PRESIDENT. THE PRESIDENT'S APRIL 25 SPEECH WAS MISINTERPRETED BY THE OPPOSITION FOR ITS OWN ENDS. THE LACK OF ANY REFERENCE TO THE SPEECH FOLLOWING THE MOST RECENT PSD-CDS SUMMIT MEETING SUGGESTS THAT BOTH PARTIES HAVE GOTTEN THE WORD.

-- PERCEPTIONS ARE ALSO DANGEROUS: THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WAS NOT INTENDED AS A CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT. BUT THE SPEECH HAS GIVEN RISE TO INTERPRETATIONS WHICH, DESPITE THE PRESIDENT'S INTENT, HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO A CLIMATE OF UNCERTAINTY, WHICH IN NO WAY CONTRIBUTES TO THE WORK THE GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO CARRY OUT.

-- OPPOSITION GAMBIT: THE PUBLIC CALLS BY THE OPPOSITION FOR A SUMMIT MEETING WITH THE PS WERE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. THEY WERE AN EFFORT TO PLACE THE SOCIALISTS BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE. THE PSD ATTEMPTED TO CAPTURE THE POLITICAL CENTER FROM THE PS AND TO PUT THE COMMUNISTS ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN. THE PS STANDS FOR DEMOCRACY AND FOR POLITICAL PLURALISM. BOTH THE PSD AND THE PCP HAVE LEGITIMATE ROLES. NEITHER SHOULD BE FORCED OUT.

-- TURNING THE TABLES: THE CDS-PSD AGREEMENT DEMONSTRATES THAT THE BASE OF SUPPORT FOR BOTH PARTIES IS ESSENTIALLY THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SAME. IT GIVES THE LIE TO PSD PRETENSIONS TO BEING A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY. THE PS IS NOT WORRIED; IT IS PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE "CONSERVATIVE BLOCK" IN THE ASSEMBLY. IF THE "CONSERVATIVES" RESORT TO SYSTEMATIC OPPOSITION, HOWEVER, THE RESULTING IMPASSE WOULD BE VERY GRAVE FOR PORTUGUESE DEMOCRACY. THE SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO MEET ITS RESPONSIBILITIES. OTHER MUST DO THE SAME.

2. COMMENT: SOARES'S COMMENTS PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE STATEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON MOST OF THE MAJOR ISSUES OF THE DAY. WHILE LITTLE OF WHAT HE SAYS IS NEW, THE OVERALL IMPACT REINFORCES HIS IMAGE AS A MAN WHO KNOWS WHERE HE IS GOING AND IS CONFIDENT OF HIS ABILITY TO GET THERE. WITHI THIS INTERVIEW AND HIS TELEVISION APPEARANCE LATER THIS EVENING, SOARES HOPES TO CAPTURE THE POLITICAL INITIATIVE FROM HIS OPPONENTS BOTH ON THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT. THE INTERVIEW, DESPITE ITS PARTISAN OVERTONES, IS A GOOD BEGINNING.
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